
FISCAL TOPICS

Fiscal Services Division

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Judgeships

District Courts

Iowa has a unified trial court system, with exclusive, general, and original jurisdiction of all actions, proceedings, remedies, and civil, criminal, probate, and juvenile cases, except in cases where exclusive or concurrent jurisdiction is conferred upon some other court, tribunal, or administrative body. There is one District Court in each county, and the counties are organized into eight judicial districts. Each district has a Chief Judge, who is selected by the Iowa Supreme Court. The following are the types of judgeships within the District Courts:

District Court Judge

- Jurisdiction (Iowa Code section [602.6202](#)) — Civil, criminal, juvenile, probate, and small claims cases.
- Apportionment (Iowa Code section [602.6201](#)) — The Supreme Court prescribes a formula to determine the number of District Judges who will serve in each judicial election district. The formula must be based upon a model that measures and applies an estimated case-related workload formula of judicial officers, and is to account for administrative duties, travel time, and other judicial duties not related to a specific case.

District Associate Judge

- Jurisdiction (Iowa Code section [602.6306](#)) — Civil (less than \$10,000), involuntary commitment or hospitalization proceedings, indictable misdemeanors, Class D felony violations and other felony arraignments, temporary or emergency protective orders, certain probate matters, and juvenile court. The judges can make court appointments and set hearings in criminal matters and have jurisdiction over any proceeding in which a Magistrate has jurisdiction (see Magistrate section below).
- Apportionment (Iowa Code section [602.6301](#)) — The number of District Associate Judges is determined by a statutory formula based on the population of a county. Under Iowa Code section [602.6302](#), three part-time judicial magistrate positions can also be converted into one full-time district associate judgeship.

Associate Juvenile Judge

- Jurisdiction (Iowa Code section [602.7103](#)) — Conduct juvenile court proceedings; issue warrants, nontestimonial identification orders, and contempt arrest warrants for adults in juvenile court proceedings; and issue orders, findings, and decisions as the judge of the juvenile court.
- Apportionment — Not determined by a formula.

Associate Probate Judge

- Jurisdiction (Iowa Code section [633.20D](#)) — Conduct probate court proceedings; issue no-contact or protective orders, injunctions, and contempt orders for adults in probate court proceedings; and issue orders, findings, and decisions as the judge of the probate court.
- Apportionment — Not determined by a formula.

Magistrate

- Jurisdiction (Iowa Code section [602.6405](#)) — Simple misdemeanors, traffic and ordinance violations, search warrant proceedings, county and municipal infractions, small claims (\$7,500 or less), and disposition of livestock or another animal (valued less than \$10,000).
- Apportionment (Iowa Code section [602.6401](#)) — The 206 magistrates are apportioned among the counties as required by criteria in statute.

More Information

Iowa Judicial Branch: www.iowacourts.gov

LSA Staff Contact: Laura Book (515.205.9275) laura.book@legis.iowa.gov

Court of Appeals

The Court of Appeals consists of one Chief Judge and eight Associate Judges. Working primarily in panels of three, the court hears cases referred by the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court

The Supreme Court consists of one Chief Justice and six justices. The court has general appellate jurisdiction and exercises supervisory and administrative control over the Judicial Branch pursuant to Article V of the Constitution of Iowa. All appeals from the District Courts are filed in the Supreme Court, which determines the cases it will refer to the Court of Appeals and which ones it will decide without referral. The court also has discretion to accept applications for further review of decisions by the Court of Appeals. The court is the highest court in the State and its opinions are binding on all other Iowa state courts.

Senior Judges

A Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, or District Court judge may become a Senior Judge upon application and assignment by the Supreme Court. A judicial officer may be appointed for a two-year term as a Senior Judge if the judicial officer meets all of the requirements under Iowa Code section [602.9203\(2\)](#). The Senior Judge must be available to perform judicial duties as assigned by the Supreme Court for an aggregate period of 13 weeks out of each successive 12-month period. Once reaching the age of 78, a Senior Judge may be reappointed to a one-year term and to a succeeding one-year term, at the discretion of the Supreme Court.

Judicial Salaries

All judicial salaries are determined by the General Assembly, as required by Iowa Code section [602.1501](#) and [602.9204\(1\)\(a\)](#), and funded by the operating budget of the Judicial Branch. The amount of each salary is set in Session Law. The following chart shows the annual salaries for all judgeship positions as set by [SF 616](#) (FY 2020 Judicial Branch Appropriations Act).

Annual Judicial Salaries (As of FY 2020)

Supreme Court		
Chief Justice	\$	186,661
Justice	\$	178,304
Court of Appeals		
Chief Judge	\$	167,160
Judge	\$	161,588
District Court		
Chief Judge	\$	156,016
District Judge	\$	150,444
District Associate	\$	133,728
Associate Juvenile	\$	133,728
Associate Probate	\$	133,728
Magistrate	\$	41,232
Senior Judge	\$	8,915